



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
August 21, 2002

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes a land exchange to consolidate land ownership and beneficial use of three individual parcels on or near the Smith River, north of White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

This proposed land exchange will provide FWP ownership of an historic boatcamp within the Smith River Corridor in exchange for 2 parcels of land currently owned by FWP which are in-holdings within the 6666's Ranch. The exchange will result in the public being able to use the boatcamp for future use under FWP ownership and the 6666's Ranch will be able to have beneficial use of two current FWP parcels of property which are currently in-holding within their ranch boundaries. The boatcamp parcel is currently leased from the 6666's Ranch.

FWP's two parcels of land are approximately 15.27 total acres of land valued at \$66,170. The 6666's parcel of land is approximately 12.84 acres of land valued at \$57,780. The difference of \$8,390 in land value will be paid by the 6666's Ranch to FWP.

To obtain a copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment evaluating this project, please contact FWP Region Four Headquarters at 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls MT 59405, or call 454-5840. You may also obtain the EA from the FWP web site at fwp.state.mt.us. Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., September 27th. Written comments should be submitted to:

Smith River Land Exchange - 6666's Ranch and FWP Land Consolidation
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Attention: Joe O'Neill
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or e-mailed to: joneill@state.mt.us

In an effort to reduce paper usage and unnecessary mailings we would appreciate a note or a call if you do not wish to be on our Smith River Land Exchange - 6666's Ranch and FWP Land Consolidation Environmental Assessment mailing list. If you have any friends or neighbors who wish to be on the list please call and we will add them to the list.

Thanks for your interest in this project, and the Smith River program.

Sincerely,

Mike Aderhold
Regional Supervisor

MEPA COMPLIANCE

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed Action

Development	_____
Renovation	_____
Maintenance	_____
Land Acquisition/Disposal	<u> X </u>
Equipment Acquisition	_____
Other (Describe)	_____

2. Name of Project

Smith River Land Exchange – 6666's Ranch and FWP Land Consolidations

3. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Joe O'Neill
(406) 454-5857

4. If Applicable:

Commencement Date	March 2002
Estimated Completion Date	October 2002

Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 95%

5. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

Parcel A – 12.84 acres in Meagher County, Section 34, T13N, R4E.

Parcel B – 5.09 acres in Meagher County, Section 34, T13N, R4E.

Parcel C – 10.18 acres in Meagher County, Section 24, T12N, R4E.

6. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (a) Developed: | (d) Floodplain..... acres |
| residential..... acres | |
| industrial acres | (e) Productive: |
| | irrigated cropland acres |
| (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... <u>17.93</u> acres | dry cropland..... acres |
| | forestry acres |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas acres | rangeland <u>10.18</u> acres |
| | other acres |

7. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

A map is attached which shows the three parcels in relation to each other. Additionally, maps are included which show the three individual parcels in detail (Parcel's A, B, and C).

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action.

This proposed land trade is intended to consolidate land ownership and beneficial use of three individual parcels on or near the Smith River. A description of each of the parcels is as follows;

Parcel A – this 12.84 acre parcel on the west bank of the Smith River is owned by the 6666's Ranch. It is currently leased to FWP for the Spring Creek Boat Camp. The public has had access to and has utilized this parcel of land for approximately 15 years via lease

arrangements with the 6666's Ranch and previous private landowners. The proposal is for this parcel to be traded from the 6666's Ranch to FWP. The appraised value of Parcel A is \$57,780.

Parcel B – this parcel is a 5.09 acre parcel owned by FWP on the east bank of the Smith River, immediately upstream from Parcel A. The recreational value of this parcel is minimal and no boat camps have ever been established on the site. This 5.09 acre parcel is essentially an in-holding on the east bank of the Smith River within the larger 6666's Ranch holdings. The proposal is to trade this FWP owned parcel to the 6666's Ranch in an effort to consolidate land ownership and usage. The appraised value of Parcel B is \$30,540.

Parcel C – is a 10.18 acre parcel owned by FWP on the east side of the county road leading to Camp Baker, the public launch site for Smith River floats. Parcel C is a portion of a larger FWP holding, lying on both sides of the existing county road. This portion of the FWP owned land identified as Parcel C and proposed to be traded to the 6666's Ranch is that 10.18 acre portion extending east of the county road. Parcel C is in effect an in-holding within the much larger acreage of 6666's Ranch holdings east of the county road. The proposal is to trade this FWP owned parcel to the 6666's Ranch in an effort to consolidate land ownership and usage. The appraised value of Parcel C is \$35,630.

Reconciliation Amount – The sum of the appraised values of the lands proposed to be exchanged between FWP and the 6666's Ranch results in a difference of \$8,390 in value. To reconcile the relative values of the proposed land exchange, the 6666's Ranch will compensate FWP an amount of \$8,390.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a comparison of the alternatives with the proposed action/preferred alternative:

Alternative 1 – Proceed with the proposed land exchange involving the three parcels of land identified above. The exchange would consolidate land ownerships for the 6666's Ranch and clear up issues related to having relatively small FWP owned in-holdings within larger private holdings (i.e. – public trespass, fencing, grazing management, etc.). Additionally, the exchange would eliminate the need for the lease of Parcel A from the 6666's Ranch and place the Spring Creek Boat Camp in public ownership. No actual land use changes are anticipated as a result of the proposed exchange between the 6666's Ranch and FWP.

Alternative 2 – No action alternative. Under this alternative Parcel A would likely continue to be leased for the Spring Creek Boat Camp on the Smith River and the two other relatively small parcels would continue as in-holding within the larger 6666's Ranch owned lands.

Intent – the intent of this proposed land exchange is to consolidate the land holdings of the 6666's Ranch and FWP on the three identified parcels. The exchange would result in the three parcels

ultimately being owned by each respective party as they have historically been managed,- for public recreational (Parcel A) and agricultural uses (Parcels B and C).

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

Agency Name _____ Permit _____ Date Filed/#
N/A

(b) Funding:

Agency Name _____ Funding Amount
N/A

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name _____ Type of Responsibility
N/A

11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the MEPA Checklist:

None

PART II. MEPA CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ₃				Can Impact Be Mitigated ₃	Comment Index
	Unknown ₃	None	Minor ₃	Potentially Significant		
<a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
<c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- α Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- αα Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
< a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
ce. For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		N/A				
f. Other		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ce Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- cc Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u>	IMPACT ₃				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ₃	None	Minor ₃	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
< a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
44l. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		N/A				
44m. For P-R/D-I, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		N/A				
n. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment In
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
For P-R/D-I f. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

< 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
4zh. For P-R/D-I, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		N/A				
4zi. For P-R/D-I, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		N/A				
j. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	IMPACT ³	Can Impact Be	Comment
-------------------------------	---------------------	---------------	---------

Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant	Mitigated ³	Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-I, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X			
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources		N/A				
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.		N/A				
g. Other: _____		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. A total of 12.84 acres will go from private to public ownership, and a total of 15.27 acres will go from public to private ownership. Thus, a net change of +2.43 acres will be on the tax rolls as private property in Meagher County. The effect on the local tax base is expected to be very minimal.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

< 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
<c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
çd. For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		N/A				
e. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
<a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
çd. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		N/A				
e. Other:		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
cf. For P-R/D-I, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		N/A				
cg. For P-R/D-I, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Name, title, address and telephone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing this MEPA Checklist.

Joe O'Neill
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406)454-5857

PART III MEPA CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in the MEPA Checklist (Part II) , is an EIS required?

YES _____

NO X

If an EIS is not required, explain why the current checklist level of review is appropriate.

2. Describe the public involvement for this project.

This draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed land exchange between the 6666's Ranch and FWP has been advertised in the Great Falls Tribune, Helena Independent Record, and the Meagher County News. Additionally, copies of the draft EA were mailed to known individuals or organizations who have had an interest in Smith River issues.

3. What was the duration of the public comment period?

The public comment period shall extend from August 21 through September 27, 2002.

EA Map Attachments:

- 1.) Vicinity map showing the relative location of the (3) parcels.
- 2.) Parcels A and B - Certificate of Survey detail map.
- 3.) Parcel C - Certificate of Survey detail map.